Primary School Teachers' Perceptions of Justice and Trust in Principals in Ankara

Figen Ereş, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Education,Department of Educational Management
Gazi University, Ankara Turkey

Murat G. Gülcan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Education,Department of Educational Management
Gazi University, Ankara Turkey

Sabri Çelik, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
School of Education,Department of Educational Management
Gazi University, Ankara Turkey

Abstract

Organizational justice and organizational trust in principal have recently gone for in matters in the area of organization and its administration that draw consideration. This study examines the relationship between sub-dimensions of perceived justice at school and the relationship between sub-dimensions and trust in school principals. This study is a descriptive research with a survey model. The sample of this study is 470 teachers who work in state primary schools in the central districts of Ankara. Results demonstrated that there is significant positive correlation between the sub-dimensions of the teachers' justice perception at school and trust in school principals. Also, it was found that the sub-dimensions of the teachers' justice perception at school were related to one another at a high level. Implications for further research were also discussed. Similar studies should be done using qualitative method such as interview, observation, discussion in different institutions and private primary schools.

Key words: Justice in school, trust in the principal, primary school, Turkey.

1. Introduction

In a study conducted by an education union in Turkey, teachers stated that they had problems with the Ministry of Education and education administrators. The most interesting of all the findings of the study is that 84.2% of the teachers stated that they did not trust the Minister of Education. Unfair practices that teachers face, such as low salaries, assignments that are not optional may result in loss of trust. Justice in organizations is an indispensable expectation, and each order involving human relations is established on justice. Justice is both a public event and an individual judgment. Teacher perception of fairness is a key to satisfaction (hoy and Tarter, 2004). The most distinctive aspect of justice is giving everyone what they deserve based on personal characteristics and skills (Botton 2001). Further, the concept of trust occurs in organizations where there is justice (Rousseau et al. 1998). Societies with high levels of trust have the capacity to set up work settings on the basis of team work and a flexible approach by giving more responsibility to lower sections of the organization. Societies with low confidence isolate their working individuals with a series of bureaucratic rules and they almost fence them in. Employees would have no satisfaction if they were treated as a gear of a big machine designed by someone else (Fukuyama 1996). Right at this point, it is necessary to discuss teachers' justice perception at school, and to what extent it affects the feeling of trust in the principal.

The dissatisfaction of teachers in schools, and lack of research on this issue motivated us to conduct this study. Therefore, we wanted to explore perception of justice and relationship between justice and trust in school principal.

It is important to determine perceived justice at school on trust in the school principle in terms of school effectiveness. Although there are various studies regarding organizational justice and trust in Turkey, there are no studies on the relation between perceived justice and trust in the school principle at primary schools in Ankara. It is an issue of concern for us how related these two concepts are in school administration in Ankara. In this context, the purpose of our study is to determine the perception levels of primary school teachers with respect to organizational justice and trust in school principals and point out the relation between them.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

2.1. Organizational Justice

The concept of organizational justice, which has become popular in organization management, was first included in Adams' social equity concept study in 1965 (Greenberg 1990). According to Adams, individuals assess the relationship of the qualities they have, such as education and experience with the aspects of earning money and work security and perceive it as negativity if there is an inequality in this relationship. This negativity brings up the concept of organizational justice (Folger and Konovsky 1989). Organizational justice is one's perception of justice based on the practices in his/her organization. It represents the employee beliefs about how fair they are treated (Greenberg 1990). In other words, organizational justice is allocating the gains and processes used in taking decisions, and rules and social norms developed with regards to interpersonal applications (Folger and Cropanzano 1998). A low justice perception in an individual with regards to his/her organization or supervisors may cause lower performance, less cooperation with colleagues (Nasurdin and Khuan 2011), decreased work quality (Cowherd and Levine 1992), and violation of norms, policies and rules of the organization (Henle 2005).

Organizational justice has three sub-dimensions as distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector 2001). Distributive Justice (DJ) is related to the results employees working at the organization obtain from the work they do and defines justice in the outcomes used by organizations, such as criteria, wages and promotions (Moorman 1991). It is related to the sharing of gains among employees, such as tasks, services, opportunities, rewards and punishments (Folger and Cropanzano 1998), roles, titles, wages and promotions (Cohen 1987) etc. in the organization (Folger 1987). Employees make use of social comparisons in assessing distributive justice. For instance, if one thinks that he/she is rewarded or paid less than a colleague at the same level, he/she decides that the organization is making an unfair distribution (Folger and Cropanzano 1998). These perceptions are generally seen in salary increases, promotions and job appointments (Scandura 1999).

Procedural Justice (PJ) defines employees' perceptions regarding their gains and justice in procedures and decisions taken, and it is legitimized as long as it is performed (Bies and Shapiro 1987; Folger 1987). The equality in opportunities provided by the management to employees also affects the justice perception of individuals (Simons and Roberson 2003). There is a reaction tendency by employees towards the whole organization in procedural justice (Folger and Konovsky 1989). One of the factors determining perceptions towards procedural justice is the behavior of the supervisor towards the employees affected by the decision taken (Colquitt et al. 2001). Employees perceive administrators' behaviors as the indicators of justice in an organization. Another one is the supervisors' explanations about the decision taken. Explanations on the reasons and foundations of the decisions taken and forming an honest relationship with the employees are the perceptions towards procedural justice (Greenberg 1990). Leventhal (1980) tried to explain procedural justice with the properties that exist in the structure of the procedures: If decisions are equally and consistently stated and performed by the administration, employees perceived procedural justice will increase.

Interactional Justice (IJ) defines justice perceived by individuals during the implementation of a procedure (Bies and Shapiro 1987). In other words, it is related to administrator's making employees accept official practices and with the fairness of their behaviors during implementation. Interactional justice, which was initially considered as the perceptions towards procedural justice, includes formal procedural justice, which is the presence of practices that are believed to be necessary for fair distribution (Niehoff and Moorman 1993). When an individual perceives that a decision is fair in the decision making process, it prompts the interactional justice perception (Simons and Roberson 2003). Employees are sensitive to the supervisor's communicating with them and respecting them during procedural justice. This communication is also based on sincerity and warmth (Bies and Shapiro 1987). In other words, administrator's rational assessments, the level of respect in their approaching to the employees have importance for the employees (Greenberg 1990). Interactional justice represents considering interpersonal communication related with procedures as fair.

These three forms of justice are related to each other; however, the general perceived justice differs from one another (Moorman 1991). Then, distributive justice defines the gains obtained; procedural justice defines the process where these gains are obtained; and interactional justice represents perceiving the experiences within this process. All three of these define justice in the organization. Interactional justice expresses the fairness of interpersonal communication regarding distributive justice and procedural justice (Moorman 1991; Folger and Cropanzano 1998). Experimental proofs show that there is a high correlation between procedural justice and interactional justice (Folger and Konovsky 1989; Moorman 1991). Cohen-Charash and Spector (2001) concluded in their meta-analytic study that all three perceptions of justice are strongly related (distributive, procedural and interactive), but independent, facts. As a result, distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice are interrelated but different structures (Colquitt et al. 2001).

2.2. Trust within an organization

Having the most important effect on the formation of human relations, trust (Vangen and Huxham 2003) is both an individual and a collective phenomenon (Shamir and Lapidot 2003). Trust is an individual's belief that the other person is helpful and honest (Rempel et al. 1985). In other words, trust is one's belief that the other person's behaviors will meet one's expectations (Mayer et al. 1995). Trust also includes the emotional attachment representing sincere care and interest (Wech 2002). The common point of the definitions made is that trust is an individual's expectation from others in human relations and their willingness to be defenseless against others (Hosmer 1995). Thus, we can say that trust is the factor that keeps people psychologically together and gives them the feeling that they are secure and is a factor which should underlie all human relations.

Trust in an organization is a phenomenon that develops as a result of conforming behaviors based on mutual respect and kindness and is generally gained slowly (Rousseau et al. 1998). Within this scope, it appears as an outcome of the organizational culture (Schein 1996). However, to generally define organizational trust, it is the individual's belief that organization is honest and reliable in line with the norms, values and common goals (Shockley-Zalabak et al. 2000). Settlement on the norms and ethical values creates an environment where employees in the organization mutually trust each other (Fukuyama 1996). It is possible to observe the characteristics of faith, hope, confidence, assurance and initiative in employees of a reliable organization (Lewicki et al. 1998).

Research on trust focuses on interpersonal trust and trust in the administrator in an organization. Researchers make a distinction between the concepts of trust in an individual and trust in an organization (Cook and Wall 1980; Deluga and Perry 1994; Nyhan and Marlowe 1997). In order for administrators to form trust within the organization, an open communication setting, a high level of decision making right for the employees, sharing important information with employees and sharing expectations and emotions about the organization are needed (Gilberth and Tang 1998). Trust in the administrator can be examined in two dimensions as cognitive and emotional. Cognitive trust is formed as a result of the fact that the interaction between the administrator and the information the administrator shares with employees are in a tight structure (McAllister 1995). An employee's trust in his/her administrator's skill and know-how and his/her belief that the administrator will not create undesirable events in terms of work shows his/her cognitive trust (Johnson and Grayson 2005).

In fact, this is an individual's perception about whether the administrators they work with are competent enough to trust. This competency includes people's honesty, maturity and communication skills (Clark and Payne 1997). As the emotional bonds become deep, trust in other person's knowledge is reinforced. This type of emotion focused trust makes relations transparent, and risk in interpersonal relations decreases when emotional trust is formed (Johnson and Grayson 2005). Based on this, if trust is formed in the organization by the administrator, employees show positive attitudes and behaviors (Korshak 1995). Trust in the organization plays a basic role in learning and performance (Costigan et al. 1998), because trust is one of the determinants of success in the organization (Lewicki and Bunker 1996). It can be accepted as one of the main obstacles of reaching organizational goals that employees do not trust their supervisor. Therefore, employees need to perceive the organization as a reliable setting.

Perceived justice in an organization is the main key in trusting the organization and it is effective on trust in the administrator (Alexander and Ruderman 1987; Caldwell and Clapham 2003; Hubbell and Chory-Assad 2005). Individual's high level of perceived justice increases trust in the administrator (Folger and Konovsky 1989; Hoffman et al. 1994; Colquitt et al. 2001).

The fairness of the procedures on which practices are based, and the gains obtained, is the indicator that administrators respect the rights of the employees and their personal values (Konovsky and Pugh 1994). If an employee believes that decisions are taken fairly, he/she will believe that they will be taken fairly in the future as well. In other words, trust changes based on how employees perceive procedural justice (Brockner and Siegel 1995). According to research on this issue, trust and procedural justice are affected by consistency in practices. Consistency in an administrator's actions, and the fact that actions he/she performs comply with commitments and speeches, forms the judgment that the administrator treats employees honestly (Leventhal 1980). Administrators have the functions of managing the relationships among people, ensuring that employees have the right perception about the organization's rules and increasing trust towards the organization as the sum of these. Therefore, interactional justice is closely related to trust in the administrator (Aryee et al. 2002). Along with these, perceptions on procedural justice and distributive justice determine trust in administrators (Alexander and Ruderman 1987). Trust develops based on procedural justice and it forms the reactions shown against the allocation of resources by means of distributive justice and interaction (Whitener 1997). Procedural justice and interactional justice are directly effective on trust. Therefore, it can be said that perceived justice at school related to trust in the school principal.

3. Method

3.1. Population and sampling

Teachers who participated in the study were employed at primary schools in the central districts of the city of Ankara in 2013 – 2014 academic years. In the calculation we made in order to find out the suitable sample size for the study, we determined the sample size as 391 people. However, for the purpose of both minimizing the risk of being affected but the difficulties encountered during the implementation and increasing the sampling validity, we considered a sample of 500 people to be sufficient. There were 470 returned questionnaires from the distribution of 500 surveys. The sample of the study is composed of a total of randomly selected teachers who volunteered to participate in the research. The data was collected in September and October of 2013.

Female participants were represented in the study with a ratio of 59.4% while male participants were represented with a ratio of 40.6%. While 62.3% of the teachers had 10 years or less experience, 16.4% had 21 years or more. A total of 59.4% of the teachers had a graduate degree, 40.6% had an undergraduate degree. A total of 83.4% of the teachers had been working at their current school for 10 years or less.

3.2. Data Gathering Instrument and Data Analysis

Two scales were used in the study in order to determine the perceived justice of teachers working at primary schools and their level of trust in the school principal. We obtained the necessary permission to be able to use the measuring instruments. Surveys were translated from English into Turkish by language experts. During the Turkish adaptation process, three language experts assisted us. Next, the scales were translated back into English and the differences reviewed. Also, the last version was obtained by having the field experts examine them. In order to find out the level of applicability of the survey, it was applied with a teacher group of 57 people, except the people in the sample group, and corrections were made based on the feedback received.

The Justice Scale developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993) was used in order to measure teachers' perceived justice at school. The scale is composed of three sub-dimensions. The distributive justice sub-dimension has five items, procedural justice has six and interactional justice has eight items. As a result of the analysis made, none of the items in the study was removed. In order to measure trust in the school principal, the Trust in Principal Scale developed by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) was used. Similarly, none of the items in the Trust in Principal Scale was removed. We accepted that both the justice scale and trust in principal scale were valid and reliable as a result of the factor analysis. There was a five point scale ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'. The definitive statistics for the components in the model are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Construct	Item	M	s	Skewness	Kurtosis
Distributive Justice	5	3.48	1.12	-.48	-.58
Procedural Justice	6	3.48	1.15	-.16	.75
Interactional Justice	8	3.56	1.06	-.49	-.46
Trust in principal	8	3.45	.98	-.43	-.39

All of the average values were above 3, which is the mean value, and standard deviations were between 0.98 and 1.15. The skewness index varied between -.49 and -.16 while the kurtosis index varied between -.58 and .75. It shows that data is in normal distribution and that the skewness index was between -3 and 3 and the kurtosis index was between -10 and 10 (Kline 2005). Recently, it has been suggested that generally three different values should be considered for the validity of the measurements in the studies (Teo 2010). These are: (1) item reliabilities for each measurement, (2) reliability values for each component and (3) the average explained variance value. Values for the scales in this study are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results for the measurement model

Latent variable	Item	Factor loading (>.70)*	Average variance extracted (>.50)	Composite reliability (>.70)*
DJ			.59	.89
	DJ 1	.79		
	DJ 2	.78		
	DJ 3	.76		
	DJ 4	.75		
PJ			.58	.89
	PJ 1	.77		
	PJ 2	.76		
	PJ 3	.71		
	PJ 4	.87		
	PJ 5	.71		
	PJ 6	.72		
IJ			.59	.96
	IJ 1	.70		
	IJ 2	.76		
	IJ 3	.78		
	IJ 4	.77		
	IJ 5	.80		
	IJ 6	.75		
	IJ 7	.81		
	IJ 8	.77		
Trust			.77	.96
	T1	.81		
	T 2	.88		
	T 3	.89		
	T 4	.87		
	T 5	.90		
	T 6	.89		
	T 7	.89		
	T 8	.89		

* Acceptable level of reliability or validity

As seen from the values in the table, the reliability and validity values for all components and all items existing in the components are at an acceptable level. Thus, we decided to continue with the data analysis based on the values obtained.

4. Results

As a result of the analysis made, we found that there were statistically significant relationships among distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice dimensions. Stated in other words, we found that the three sub-dimensions of perceived justice had a high level of correlation with each other. The relationship between distributive justice and procedural justice is significant ($r=.81$, $p<.05$). Teachers associate course allocation at school, responsibilities other than courses, tasks given, rewards and principal's delivering these impartially with explanations given in advance, with approval from teachers considering the legal regulations; with justice perception. The relationship between distributive justice and interactional justice is significant ($r=.88$, $p<.05$). Teachers associate equal tasks and responsibilities taken in a school setting with the principal's informing the teachers about these with a positive attitude and positive behavior.

The relationship between procedural justice and interactional justice is significant (r=.82, p<.05). In this correlation, teachers assess a principal's behaving in a positive and consistent manner in all the necessary duties he/she carries out at school and his/her explaining these to teachers together. Also, the high correlation of these three sub-dimensions indicates that the participants are inclined to see these three sub-dimensions as a whole. In other words, distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice are perceived justice that are different from each other but closely related to each other.

Another analysis in the study was related to the relation sub-dimensions of organizational justice and trust in principal. According to results, the relationship between distributive justice and trust in principal is not significant (r=.10, p<.05). The reason why this dimension is perceived as lower than the others can be the reflection of the centralized structure of the education system in Turkey. Then it may be said that centralized structure of the education system affects distributive justice perception of teachers negatively in school. The relationship between interactional justice and trust in principal is significant (r=.88, p<.05). Based on this result, it is possible to say that the principal's attitudes and behaviors towards teachers affect teachers' perceived trust in the principal more than the others. The relationship between procedural justice and trust in principal is low (r=.45, p<.05). In this dimension, which is about the allocation of limited resources of the Turkish Education System, teachers expressed their perception of trust in the principal, who is not directly responsible for regarding the process he/she follows in distributing the sources.

5. Discussion

The purpose of our study was to determine the perception levels of primary school teachers with respect to organizational justice and trust in school principals and point out the relation between them. According to the results we obtained, we saw that teachers perceive all three sub-dimensions of organizational justice at a "high" level. However, the interactional justice perception of teachers (M=3.56) is higher than procedural justice (M=3.48) and distributive justice perceptions (M=3.48). We can say that principal-teacher relationships at the schools in Ankara are valued more than procedures, rewards or punishment allocation. Also, that the interactional justice perception is high can be interpreted as it is related to the communication between the principal and teachers at school. According to the results, teachers think that sources and benefits at school are distributed fairly (Folger and Konovsky 1989).

Teachers compare their gains and losses with the education, experience, period of work, stress at school and the effort they make. If the decisions taken by the school principal are consistent, and if he/she is performing them equally and consistently for everyone based on the equity principle; if he/she collects information that the decisions are based on before the decision making process completely, accurately and correctly with no conflict, the perceived procedural justice of the teachers who are affected by these decisions increases (Leventhal 1980). Teachers' perceptions of distributive justice and procedural justice at school are the predictors of one another (Moorman 1991; Folger and Crapanzona, 1998; Hauenstein et al. 2001). Teachers interpret the gains they think they have deserved and the principal's decision making process regarding these gains as one (Folger 1987; Konovsky 2000). Teachers' distributive justice and interactional justice perceptions also predict one another. Teachers think about obtaining the gains they think they have deserved as a result of positive communication with the principal. In other words, it becomes important for teachers that a task, rewards or a promotion that the principal gives is given willingly (Moorman 1991; Folger and Cropanzano 1998). Teachers' procedural justice and interactional justice perceptions also predict one another.

Procedural justice, which means decisions taken at school should be fair, is not sufficient enough to make teachers feel that they are treated fairly (Greenberg 1990). Teachers care about the interpersonal relations experienced during the implementation process as much as the fair decisions taken because interactional justice is the interpersonal relations dimension of procedural justice and based on mutual support (Niehoff and Moorman 1993). Although interactional justice sometimes exists in procedural justice in some definitions (Cropanzano and Ambrose 2001), the results we obtain show that interactional justice has a different structure while also being the complementary of procedural justice (Folger and Cropanzano 1998). Further, teachers associate the three types of perceived justice with each other. In other words, teachers' three types of perceived justice are closely related to each other. The values we have obtained indicate that our hypotheses in relation to justice were confirmed.

As a result of the study, we concluded that the perceived justice of teacher at school related to trust in the school principal. It causes the employees to trust the administrator if the administrator is fair (Hoy and Tarter 2004).

We can say based on our findings that at the schools, which are non-profit organizations, the principals should act fairly in order for employees to trust him/her as it is in other types of organizations. Teachers believe that they are treated fairly when school principals provide correct and accurate information to them and when they show correct reasoning with regards to the decisions they take. This created trust in the school principal. The centralized structure of the Turkish education system adversely affects school principals' independence in decision making processes. That teachers are aware of this centralized structure affects their perceived distributive justice. Also, it is noteworthy that teachers demonstrate trust in the principals' attitudes and behaviors. This finding leads us to deduce that communication can be an important factor in the teacher – school principal relationship (Ellis and Shockley-Zalabak 2001). In addition to this, if teachers' perceived justice related to trust in the principal, perceived justice can also affect teachers' performances through trust (Chenhall and Langfield-Smith 2003).

Several more examples can be given regarding the chain relationship of justice and trust in an organization with different phenomenon. In this sense, the fair behaviors and practices of the school principal are both important in being trusted and the basic element in organizational effectiveness and success. In line with this importance, our suggestion to the school principals is firstly that they should behave respectfully, fairly and sensitively in their relationships with teachers. Also, it may have a positive effect on teachers that they are involved in the decisions that affect them. Since trust and justice are two inseparable parts, the success of a school depends on those school principals who are trusted.

One of the limits of this study is that it was conducted in only the public primary schools in Ankara. However, findings obtained may be exemplary for future studies. Additionally, there is a need for more and different studies on teachers' perceived justice and trust in school principals. Perceived justice at school and trust in school principals can be studied by forming associations with such issues as communication, human relations, performance and leadership at school. Also, conducting studies with a similar scope at private primary schools may be helpful in comparing public and private schools.

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